

A Brief Account of the Dispensary, erected at the College of Physicians in Warwick-lane, London, for the Relief of the Sick Poor.

THe Physicians of the College having taken into their consideration the miserable condition of the Sick Poor in and about London (many hundreds of whom perish yearly for want of due Care and Assistance in their Sicknesses) have in divers manners, and at divers times long since attempted their Relief.

But not to be tedious in tracing matters too far backward, it will be sufficient to take notice, That in the year 1687. at a Publick meeting of the College it was unanimously Voted,

That all Members of the College, whether Fellows, Candidates, or Licentiates, should give their Advice gratis to all their Sick neighbouring Poor, when des'd, within the City of London, or seven miles round.

This Order was carried to the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen, and by them communicated to their respective Wards.

But notwithstanding the concurrence of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen with the Physicians in so laudable a design, these Charitable Intentions were for a long time defeated by the Apothecaries, and by some others, that to gratifie them, made an Oblation to 'em of their own Honour and Consciences, and the Lives of the Poor.

For the Physicians having yet no other means to help and assist the Poor, than by their Advice and Care, their Prescriptions must of necessity come to the Apothecaries to be made up, who exacted such extravagant Prices for such Medicines, as render'd the other's Charity ineffectual, and made numbers desperately negligent of Advice, for fear of the Charge of an Apothecary's Bill.

To remedy this Grievance, and keep unconscionable Men from grinding the Faces of the Poor, a Proposal was made to the Apothecaries for serving the Poor at a certain moderate rate, to be agreed upon between the Physicians and themselves. But they, who had always been us'd arbitrarily to tax the necessities of the People, haughtily rejected the motion, fearing perhaps that such a Regulation (tho propos'd only for the gratis Prescriptions of Physicians) might discover their past, and prevent their future exactions.

'Tis true, there were amongst the Apothecaries some honest men, that were willing to embrace this Proposal, and did enter into the following Subscription. 'We whose Names are here underwritten, are willing to furnish the Poor within our respective Parishes at such rates as the Committee of Physicians shall think reasonable. Witness our hands.] But no sooner had the rest notice of it, but a Hall was call'd, and the Apothecaries thus subscribing, partly by reproaches and partly by menaces, so far intimidated, as to retract their Promise given under their hands, and desert the charitable design they had been prevail'd upon to enter into.

Hereupon a Proposal was started by a Committee of the City to the Committee of the College, that the College should furnish the Medicines for the Poor, and perfect alone that Charity, which the Apothecaries refus'd to concur in; and after divers methods ineffectually tryed, and much time vainly spent in endeavouring to bring the Apothecaries to terms of Reason in relation to the Poor, an Instrument was subscrib'd by divers charitably dispos'd Members of the College, now in number above fifty, wherein they oblig'd themselves to pay ten pounds apiece towards the preparing, and delivering Medicines to the Poor at the intrinsick value.

This was immediately put in execution, and the Laboratory, the Room adjoining, and another Room under the Theatre at the College fitted up for that purpose; and notwithstanding the open Opposition, private Cabals, and secret Treachery of some corrupt intriguing Members, that have promis'd the overthrow of it to the Apothecaries, 'tis carried on with that success, that several Thousand Prescriptions have been already made up, and deliver'd out, to the great relief of the Poor.

The Advantages arising to the Poor from this Charitable Undertaking are many, but especially four, which are very great.

1st, That all the Medicines from hence deliver'd to 'em are unquestionably good, being made of the best Drugs, and not decay'd.

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2dly. That the Med'cines which they take, are faithfully made up, according to the Prescription of their Physician.

3dly. That they know their expence, before they engage in it, and can't be imposed upon in the Price of their Med'cines.

4thly. That they have *gratis* the Advice of an able, approv'd Physician, whose Ability is warranted by the College of Physicians, and his Practice by the Laws of the Land.

The daily experience which the Subscribers have, of the ill Effects of bad Med'cines, has oblig'd 'em to be very careful to provide against the mischievous consequences of such Med'cines, if they should creep into the *Dispensary*, which is the name of the Repository of their Med'cines. To that end, two out of their number are chosen monthly to be *Curators*, whose peculiar business it is to look after the *Dispensation* of all Med'cines, to see the mixing of the Drugs, and to examine nicely the goodness of 'em, and frequently to revise all Med'cines already made, and set aside such as they shall find to be in the least decay'd. But tho' it be more peculiarly the care of these *Curators* to look after the Dispensation of all Med'cines, yet it being an Article of such importance to the lives and health of their fellow Subjects, few Med'cines are there dispens'd, the Ingredients of which have not first been carefully inspected, examin'd and approv'd by the greatest part of the Subscribers.

'Tis evident that no *Apothecari's* Shop can pretend to this exactness, since 'tis impossible for any of those that make their own Med'cines, (who are not fifty out of so many hundreds within the Bills of Mortality) so to calculate what their vent shall be, as to make a quantity just sufficient to answer the demands of their Customers; nor is there any reason (if we may measure their Conscience in this case by their other dealings) to suspect 'em of so much honesty as to throw away Drugs, which they can't vend, tho' decay'd. But that they do not throw any such away; may be demonstratively prov'd. For 'tis notorious, that the *Wholesale* Apothecaries, by whom the rest are furnish'd, make several sorts as to Price and Goodness, of the same Med'cine, the worst of which is call'd *simply* by the *name* of the Med'cine, another is call'd the *better sort*, and a third *the best*. Now let the world judge, if those, that for their gain industriously make up bad Med'cines, will rob themselves of the Profit of such as shall only accidentally become so.

As for the *Retail* Apothecaries, who buy of the *Wholesale*, 'tis plain, that not making 'em themselves they can't be assur'd of the goodness of their Med'cines. But 'tis vehemently to be suspected, that they are certain of the contrary; since the quantity of the sort call'd *simply* by the *name* made by the *Wholesale* Apothecaries, very much exceeds the quantity of that, which they call *the Best*, and demand the highest price for. Which is a strong presumption, that the worst sort, because of the lowness of the price, is most call'd for by the *Retail* Apothecaries their Customers.

A second advantage from the *Dispensary* is, that whatever is prescrib'd for the Patient, is faithfully made up there. 'Tis but too notorious, that the Apothecaries, when any Med'cine, which they have not in their Shops, happens to be prescrib'd, take the liberty of substituting something else in the stead of it; so that the Patient is in such a case cheated of his Fee, being by such alterations denied the benefit of his Physicians Judgment; which he paid for, and sometimes of his Life, and the Physician of his Reputation by unskilful pernicious Changes. This can't happen at the *College*, because the person who makes up, and delivers the Med'cines out, is a Servant, and has no Interest beyond his Salary in the Office, and consequently no temptation to so vile a cheat; nor if he had, could he pass undiscover'd, because being constantly obliged to account for the quantity of any Med'cine delivered out, whether Simple or Compound, by Bills under the hands of Subscribers, should he vary from them, his accounts could not be adjusted. Nor does he lie under any necessity to do it, because the Subscribers knowing what they should have occasion for, have provided plentifully to answer all demands, every Subscriber having a right to have such Med'cines prepar'd there, as he knows he shall call for in his Bills.

The case is quite otherwise with the Apothecary, he being often put upon it by the slenderness of his stock, which is generally furnish'd only for his own practice, the best provided of 'em not affording two hundred different Med'cines, whereas the *London Dispensary* alone contains about eleven hundred *Galenical* Medicines only, besides the vast variety of *Chymical* Med'cines, that are now in use, and an almost infinite number of Simples. He is likewise frequently prompted by Avarice to substitute a cheap Med'cine for a dear one, such as the inside of Oyster shells for Pearl, *New England* for *Russian* Cassia, *Spanish* Saffron, and even *Turnerick* for *English* Saffron, &c. whereby the Patient is abus'd in his body, as well as his Purse. In all

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which Cheats they are the bolder, because their practices are submitted to the Inspection of none but their Servants and selves.

The exorbitances of the Apothecaries *Bills* have been for a long time the most sensible, if not the greatest Grievance to the people. The fore-mentioned *abuses* were felt only in their consequences, while the parties aggrieved languished under miseries of which they seldom suspected the true cause. But their Purges complain'd loudly of *intolerable exactions*, while every visitation of sickness was worse to 'em than a Land Tax. Tho' this might be patiently enough supported by the Rich, who were willing to purchase the recovery of their health at any rate; yet it was a burthen under which the meaner Tradesmen, their Servants, and the Poor groan'd exceedingly. And what made these impositions frequently more insupportable was, that the charge was in many cases one person's, and the danger another's; and he that felt none of the pain, was to pay for the relief; and therefore grudg'd the expence.

The Physicians had (as we have already observ'd) frequently offer'd to contribute their part toward the relief of such indigent people; which Charity of theirs was in great measure frustrated by the Apothecaries obstinate refusal to moderate their gains, tho' with respect to the poor only. In the sitting up therefore of the *Laboratory*, and *Dispensary* at the College of Physicians, regard was chiefly had to the meaner sort of Tradesmen and their Apprentices, to Servants, and the poor, for whose benefit this Subscription was enter'd into, the Subscribers intending no advantage to themselves by them, but the Merits of their Charity.

For this purpose there are Servants constantly attending at the College to make up all such Bills as shall come from any Subscriber, and to deliver 'em at the rates set upon 'em by the Physician that writes the Bill, which is done according to a Book of Rates delivered to each Subscriber, appriz'd by a Committee by themselves appointed for that purpose, at the intrinick value, which by a modest computation is lower by fifteen Shillings in the pound Sterling, than the ordinary demands of the Apothecaries, besides their extraordinary Arts of swelling a Bill. The price being set upon the Bill, secures the Patient, that he shall not be exacted upon by the Servants, and likewise inform him, what his charge is like to be; whereas by running on Tick with the Apothecary, he is engag'd in an expence which he can't compute, and frequently in a debt which he can't without ruine discharge.

It must be confess'd, that, to come to a *Par* with the *Dispensary* in the rates of their Medicines, the *Apothecaries* must give away their Profits, which would ruine 'em. But so much was never desir'd of 'em; it was propos'd only, that they shou'd moderate their Gains, and by ascertaining the rates of Medicines for the use of the Poor, assure 'em that they shou'd not be impos'd upon, which was with indignation and ill manners rejected by 'em. It is indeed expected, that they shou'd abate very much of their present exactions upon the Rich, as well as Poor; and not pretend upon a Mechanick Education, and a Stock of Fifty Pounds (which is more than the intrinick value of all the Medicines and Drugs in most Apothecaries Shops in or about *London*, the other Furniture of their Shops, as Pots, Glasses, &c. being a dead Stock, which makes no returns, and requires daily reparation) to rival the Gains and Expences of the most considerable of their Neighbours, that employ in Trade four, five, or ten thousand pounds, that is, fourscore, a hundred, or two hundred times their Stock, as most of 'em apparently do; and all of 'em outfigure, and look with scorn upon their Neighbours, that employ ten, and twenty times their Stock. From hence, without a nice enquiry into particulars, it may be easily guess't what their Profits must be, that out of so poor a Stock can maintain so great Pride and Expence.

But leaving the Apothecaries to rate their Bills as they think fit, the Subscribers wish, that instead of taking the *intrinick value* of their Medicines only, they cou'd afford to *rent* even that too. But that being a Charge too heavy for the Shoulders of a few private men, considering the vast numbers of Sick Poor (not receiv'd into the Hospitals, or taken care of by 'em) that want such relief, the Subscribers content themselves with this *Lifay*, till the concurring Charity of others more able shall empower 'em to do more.

But that this Charity may be as compleat, as it lies in their power to make it, the Physicians subscribing do every one of 'em severally engage to give their Advice *gratis* to all such Poor, as shall apply to them at the places of their Habitation, and to visit such of them as are not able to come to them, as often as need shall require, at their own dwellings. And further to encourage the Poor to resort to 'em in their necessities, two of 'em do constantly every *Monday* and *Saturday* in the afternoon attend at the College of Physicians, to consider, and advise upon the complaints of all such Poor, as repair to 'em for advice. And they are willing to do it oftener, if it shall be thought necessary.

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This 'tis hop'd may suffice to vindicate so charitable and so honourable an undertaking from the false Insinuations and Aspersions of some base Principled Men, who find it their Interest to oppose both Justice and Charity; and to invite Publick-spirited persons to imitate so fair an Example, and encourage so useful a Charity, by endeavouring to promote and extend it.

This Account has been render'd necessary, by the malice of some persons, who have industriously spread abroad a report, that the Subscribers were weary of their Charity, and discontinued it; whereas the contrary is so certain, that they do now pursue it with greater Application and Success than ever; the Poor daily resorting to 'em in great numbers.

A List of the Names of the Subscribers to the Dispensary at the College of Physicians, in *Warwick-lane*, *L O N D O N*.

S R. <i>Tho. Millington</i> , President.	<i>Dan. Cox.</i>	<i>Martin Lyster.</i>
<i>Tho. Barwell</i> , Elect and Censor.	<i>Henry Sampson.</i>	<i>Jo. Colbatch.</i>
<i>Sam. Collins</i> , Elect.	<i>Thomas Gibson.</i>	<i>Bernard Conner.</i>
<i>Edw. Brown</i> , Elect.	<i>Charles Goodal.</i>	<i>W. Cockburn.</i>
<i>Rich. Tortell</i> , Elect and Censor.	<i>Sir Edm. King.</i>	<i>J. le Fevre.</i>
<i>Edw. Hulfe</i> , Elect.	<i>Sam. Garth.</i>	<i>P. Sylvestier.</i>
<i>Tho. Gill</i> , Censor.	<i>Barn. Soame.</i>	<i>Ch. Morton.</i>
<i>Will. Dawes</i> , Censor.	<i>Denton Nicholas.</i>	<i>Walt. Charlton.</i>
<i>Jo. Hutton.</i>	<i>Joseph Gaylard.</i>	<i>Phineas Fowke.</i>
<i>Rob. Brady.</i>	<i>John Woolaston.</i>	<i>Tho. Alvey.</i>
<i>Hans Sloane.</i>	<i>Steph. Huns.</i>	<i>Rob. Gray.</i>
<i>Rich. Morton.</i>	<i>Oliver Horsfeman.</i>	<i>John Wright.</i>
<i>John Hawys.</i>	<i>Rich. Morton, Jun.</i>	<i>James Drake.</i>
<i>Ch. Harel.</i>	<i>David Hamilton.</i>	<i>Sam. Morris.</i>
<i>Rich. Robinson.</i>	<i>Hen. Morelli.</i>	<i>John Woodward.</i>
<i>Job. Bateman.</i>	<i>Walter Harris.</i>	<i>... Norris.</i>
<i>Walter Mills.</i>	<i>Will. Briggs.</i>	<i>George Colebrook.</i>
	<i>Tho. Colladon.</i>	<i>Gideon Harvey.</i>

